

LETTERS

What does Wikipedia ban on AI article generation mean?

On March 20 2026, Wikipedia banned AI-generated articles. Editors are no longer allowed to use artificial intelligence or large language models to create articles from scratch.

The announcement noted that AI can produce content in seconds but verifying it takes hours. The Wikimedia Foundation found that this is not a fair trade-off for unpaid volunteers.

English Wikipedia is the largest and most heavily used by AI models for training, with about 7.1 million articles, followed by the German-language edition with around 3.1 million. The ban therefore sets a precedent for other language versions.

This decision recognises gains in knowledge creation while also signalling that artificial intelligence will take a back seat on Wikipedia. After reading the announcement, I have two takeaways as project lead for the Runyankore Wikipedia. Because Wikipedia is a massive, well-curated and multilingual corpus of human knowledge, creating that knowledge should remain a human task.

Wikipedia is one of the largest and most important sources of training data for artificial intelligence, yet the encyclopaedia itself cannot now be written by AI. My second takeaway is that knowledge is crucial and its creation must be written and checked by people.

The Wikimedia Foundation is not technophobic; it has not banned artificial intelligence entirely. There are two exceptions. First, AI-assisted translations are acceptable. Machine translations can form the base for language versions, but AI translations are often imperfect. A human element is still necessary after translating from English to Runyankore, Luganda or other Ugandan languages – the text must be reviewed and fact-checked by people. Content creation must have a human touch.

The second exception allows the use of artificial intelligence for minor copy-editing. In simple terms, being used like any other grammar checker or writing assistance tool such as the Word online spell checker.

There is a caveat: when using large LLMs such as ChatGPT or Sunflower AI Uganda to make copy edits, editors must keep control of the tool and not let it take on a mind of its own.

Even with these exceptions, artificial intelligence should not be used to generate articles. It may assist with translations and minor edits, but it cannot replace human authorship.

What does this mean for Uganda? The country is making progress: the Aeonian project, a large-scale sovereign AI centre, launches this year. It will house several AI modules and the USIO supercomputer, boosting data processing capacity in East Africa and strengthening digital sovereignty. However, Uganda still has gaps in AI governance and policy. A comprehensive National AI Policy is expected by mid-2026 alongside a National Data Strategy to plug some of these holes.

In the meantime we can bridge the content gap through Wikimedia projects such as Wikidata, Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons. The Wikimedia Community User Group Uganda, a group of about 600 volunteers, is always ready to support new editors. This is an area we can improve immediately without massive infrastructure. Artificial intelligence feeds off big sources like Wikipedia and Wikidata, which provide structured data, so contributing to these projects gives AI more accurate and contextualised information about Uganda. You can write an article on Wikipedia about places like Kyanamira in Kabale, Bungatira in Gulu or Bugala Island in Kalangala District. By providing authentic information, you feed the resource that AI depends on.

Think of it like this: if a one-year-old toddler (AI) is being breastfed by its mother (Wikipedia), you can't ask the toddler to feed the mother. It doesn't make sense. Article generation using AI on Wikipedia is similarly absurd. Asking a toddler to feed its nursing mother reverses the natural order. Article generation using AI on Wikipedia is like asking a toddler to feed its nursing mother – the natural order is reversed.

To sum up, the use of artificial intelligence on Wikipedia should follow the Wikimedia Foundation's guidelines, but article creation belongs to humans. Just as a breastfeeding mother nourishes her child and not the other way around, human editors must continue to feed the encyclopaedia.

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